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night in the *etambo* praying to or communing with ancestral spirits, when the occasion arises; Suku is regarded as too remote to receive prayers.

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While cooking, a woman may spill a little meal on the ground for the spirits; at a meal, a person may spill a little food or beer for the same purpose. A portion of the meat at a feast may likewise be sacrificed, but it is often a less desirable portion, such as the intestines.(1)

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Agricultural rituals were held before planting, at which time the headman and his wife had intercourse in their field and sacred seed from the chief's granary was distributed, a few grains to be mixed with the seed to be planted on each plot. When the maize began to ripen a few ears were sent to the chief before any were eaten.(2)

DIVINERS(3)

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The word *ocimbanda* is used both for a diviner and for a maker of medicines. To distinguish the two, the diviner may be called *ocimbanda congombo* ("of the basket"), the herbalist *ocimbanda coviti* ("of trees or sticks"). Some practitioners are both diviner and herbalist. A female diviner is called *cambula*.(4) An *ocimbanda* frequently specialises in a certain kind of case;(5) and among the members of the profession there are many degrees of proficiency. One may work only in his own village, another may be consulted on matters of concern to the whole district or chiefdom; others go on professional journeys carrying their baskets, and accumulate profits in animals and cloth. The greater the reputation of the diviner, the greater the charges he makes for his services.

The tasks of the *ocimbanda* are:-

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(a) To discover the cause of sickness, death, or any evil which has befallen the individual or the community. Sickness and death are always believed to be due either to the workings of spirits who are demanding sacrifices, or to living enemies who have malicious spirits under their control or who have bought potent charms. The diviner, after consulting the spirit who speaks in and through his basket, names the spirit who is causing the trouble and tells the victim what its demands are, or, if the enemy is a living person, indicates in a general manner from whence the trouble comes, e.g. to a woman "Your baskets are too well made; you are hated because of them", or, to a man, "This illness was found on a journey taken to collect a debt". If requested, the diviner makes a counter-charm to offset that which has caused the ill.

(b) To interpret omens and dreams.

(c) To give advice on personal problems.

(d) To dispense medicines and charms.

(e) To bring or withhold rain, or to see who is guilty of withholding it. [789]

(1) Ibid., see also Cushnan, loc.cit.
(2) Childs, personal communication.
(3) Based on Tucker, 1940.
(4) Hambly, (3) 1936.
(5) Ibid.

4:Dorsey E-4, 5 (no date)1899 FP13 Mbundu FP13

THE OCIMBANDA, OR WITCH-DOCTOR OF THE OVIMBUNDU OF PORTUGUESE SOUTHWEST AFRICA.

In July of last year the Anthropological Department of the Field Columbian Museum secured an ethnological collection from the Ovimbundu of the Portuguese African province of Angola. The collection was made by Rev. T. W. Woodside, a missionary for seven years among the Ovimbundu, and, on account of its completeness and the full data which accompanied the objects, is of unusual importance and value. Perhaps of chief interest among the series of objects illustrating the various phases of native life in this region is the complete "medicine chest" of a witch-doctor. This I shall describe, making free use of the extensive notes furnished by Mr. Woodside, supplemented by several conversations during which the objects themselves were discussed, and much information furnished concerning the Ovimbundu in general. The collection under consideration was obtained from a single individual, and has seen long use.

The Ovimbundu are a southern division of an extensive group of people known as the Bundas, who, in turn, belong to the group of Bantu populations. They occupy the territory of the Bailundu and Bihe plateaus, from Bengualla to the Quanza River, a table-land 4000 to upwards of 6000 feet high, and in south latitude about twelve degrees. The Ovimbundu are described by Mr. Woodside as a dark-skinned people, varying from coffee-brown to quite black, with thick curly hair. They are entirely uncivilized, but are a peaceable, kindly people. Their food is chiefly vegetal, although they possess cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, and chickens. They practise polygamy, and the women prepare the food and do nearly all the field work. The men are famous as traders, and journey to the interior for rubber, wax, ivory, and slaves; the latter they secure by purchase from the country of the Lubas. The principal medium of exchange is a cheap cotton cloth which is obtained from white travellers.

Among the Ovimbundu, as in nearly all parts of Africa, the witch-doctor is an important personage. He is feared by all classes, and often has more influence and power than the chief himself. Whenever anything is lost or stolen, they apply to the witch-doctor to find out where the object is, or who is the thief. As no one is supposed to die a natural death, the doctor is called in to discover the witch who caused the death. To him they go for all kinds of charms to protect themselves against all evils, or to cast a spell on some one whom they wish to injure; to him they also go for help in

4:Dorsey E-4, 5 (no date)1899 FP13 Mbundu FP13

case of sickness. He is also a diviner, reading both the past and future. At all spirit feasts, at the installation of a new chief, in preparation for war, and on almost every occasion the witch-doctor plays a prominent part. He bears an influential position among his people, and his art is the source of a considerable income, for always before he begins operations the pay must be brought and laid down before him. Thus it is that he is loth to part with even a few of his charms, much less a full set.

The ocimbanda does not inherit his power, but must serve a long apprenticeship to some old witch-doctor, whom he pays liberally. He is then given a small basket with a few charms, to which he adds from time to time. His idols and charms are not made by him, but are purchased one by one. All of these objects are considered powerful, *cikola* or sacred, and the common people are afraid to touch them; even the touch of a white man is sacrilegious. One of the distinguishing features of a witch-doctor's costume is a head-dress, *ekufue*, made of long porcupine quills fastened together at one end, sewn to a cloth disk about two inches in diameter. Many of the quills are over a foot in length. This headdress is only worn when divining. He also occasionally wears about the loins a girdle, *uya*, consisting of a strip of antelope skin sewn together along the two edges, thus forming a pouch which contains medicines. Attached to the girdle are war charms and medicines, of which he eats from time to time. There are also several kinds of small skins in the collection, on which the doctor kneels when about to perform. Two pigments should also be noticed. The first is a white, clayey substance, *ocikela*, with which the ocimbanda paints himself, and with which he also marks the person whom by his divining he has discovered to be innocent, the sign of acquittal being a mark across the forehead and down the arms. The other pigment is a red clay, *onongo*, with which he also marks his own body and employs as the sign of guilt.

Of the various objects of the ocimbanda's outfit proper, the most important is the basket, *uhamba*, in which the outfit is kept. When it is said that so and so has a "uhamba," it means that he is a witch-doctor. The basket is thirteen inches high by nineteen in length, and eight inches in thickness. The ends are rounded, thus giving the basket, as seen from above, an elliptical form. The cover, three inches in height, fits closely down over the basket, after the manner of our telescope bag. The bottom of the basket is made separate, and is fastened by means of an interlacing of grass braid. The sides of the basket are simply one long strip of interlaced reed and bark fibre, the ends overlapping and being fastened together by the grass braid, which passes up continuously from the bottom to

[i.e., diviner.-- Analyst]

5: Hambly E-5 (1929-30) 1934 FP 13 Mbundu FP13

462 331 be reversed and asked whether men could not carry the water. I was told that such a man would be laughed at and called a "he-woman." Yet division of labor does not imply sex inferiority, and ridicule would arise from incongruity.

MEDICINE-MEN

● 759 791 The training of a medicine-man (ocimbanda) and a medicine-woman (chambula) involves few formalities, but this class of work requires that a novice shall have "spirit in the head." When visited by a sick boy the medicine-man shakes his divination basket and if a certain combination of objects appears, he says, "Your father was ocimbanda and his spirit wants you." The boy who is thus adopted has to accompany the medicine-man, his master, carrying apparatus and standing near to play a small friction drum while the master is shaking his divination basket.

Specialization among medicine-men is carried to great degree of refinement, especially among those practitioners who profess therapeutic knowledge. I employed three medicine-men to collect plants, of which they appeared to have an expert knowledge. Umbundu names were given and the curative properties of each plant were explained with enthusiasm and evident conviction. The men were undoubtedly sincere in their own beliefs. A specialist who can cure blood in the urine, and another who is said to treat dizziness successfully, are greatly respected. The rainmaker is ocimbanda opulia, "the medicine-man of the rain," who dances while flourishing a cow-tail switch, and blowing a shrill whistle intermittently.

Ocimbanda is of course distinguished from onganga, since the former is concerned with socially beneficent tasks such as those mentioned, while [754] the latter may cause sickness, impotence, and sterility. In earlier days the task of finding sorcerers (onganga) by use of the poison ordeal was that of an ocimbanda. Medicine-women are called in to take care of difficult cases of childbirth, and I have seen a medicine-woman painting the face of a pregnant woman, who thereafter observed certain taboos.

Space will not permit enumeration of the contents of a divination basket and the significance attached to each item; neither can I give details of ceremonies for curing the sick or bringing a thief back to the village, but the foregoing notes suffice to show that the craft is specialized and still important. A medicine-man ceremonially washes a king or chief on rare occasions. He makes new fire by twirling; though flint and steel, also matches, are known. When a new village is founded a medicine-man stirs [782] the blood of sacrificed animals with the claws of a chicken; then he sprinkles this blood on each new house.

5: Hambly E-5 (1929-30)1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

At Caconda I obtained the basket of a medicine-man which contained a human tibia, a hoe for digging in graves, and a round stone for pounding the bone before mixing it with fat and charcoal. Medicine-men still make potions for internal use, and these are usually carried in small horns suspended round the neck, or the paste may be contained in the carapace of a tortoise. In every way the medicine-man is still functioning, and his tasks are fundamental to the social and religious life of the Ovimbundu. 759 791

At an early age children specialize in their play which has a bearing on the business of life. Boys make wooden-tipped arrows, play at hunting, and shoot at tubers which are rolled along the ground. Girls take clay from the potters to fabricate their own small cooking pots, and young girls attempt the coiling of basketry. 868

Men are the musicians, and among these a high degree of specialization is observed. In a large village there are likely to be only a few competent drummers, and only a few men who play the small iron-keyed instrument called ocisanji. Osaka is a ritual game played only by men, and only when a village headman or a king is dying. The ball (ombunje) is made by sewing lizard skin over a hard spherical fruit about six centimeters in diameter. A man continues to dance with this little ball clenched in his outstretched hand, while another dancer hits the muscles of his arm to make him release the ball. This game is thought to give strength to the sick man. There is a transfer of the endurance of the dancers to the invalid. 533 535 524 755

Preliminary observation in some villages occupied by Ovimbundu is disappointing in its suggestion of Europeanization. The foreign culture is, however, a thin veneer, and further research shows a strong persistence of indigenous custom and belief quite near to centers of Portuguese influence. 197

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